

INDIAN FAIRY TALES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

More Indian Fairy Tales

The Story of India

The Story of Man

The Story of Chacha Nehru

Indian fairy tales

Retold by
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KUTUB-POPULAR

PREFACE

The stories contained in this volume were told to me by my mother and my aunts during my childhood. The primary inspiration to retell them, therefore, came from the nostalgic memories of the hour when 'once upon a time' began and when one's eyes closed long before the story ended.

But I also had in mind the fact that in the folk stories of our country lay the only links with our broken tradition. I fancied that only by going back to the form of these stories, told by mother to son, and son to son, could we evolve a new pattern for the contemporary short story. Of course, the modern short story is a highly developed folk tale, if it is a folk tale at all. But a revival of the short story form, like the present, seemed a fit occasion to relate it to its more primitive antecedents which, surprisingly enough, seem to lie in the sources of the sheaf of tales which I have gleaned. At any rate, I must confess that although I have taken in much new psychology into my own writing of the short story, I have always tried to approximate to the technique of the folk tale, and the influence of these fairy stories has always been very deep on my short fiction.

These fairy stories can, therefore, be read not only by children, but by those adults who have not forgotten the child in them. And, however foreign they may seem to non-Indians, in their atmosphere and effect, I offer them here, not as something completely alien to the Western

peoples, but as familiar and well known themes to set beside the fairy tales which they have read in their childhoods, because there has been much international traffic in folk lore between India and the West, through traders, travellers, gypsies, craftsmen and crusaders, and many of the stories current abroad have their source in the same springs in which these stories have their origin.

While retelling them from memories of several years ago, I have collated them with other texts to get the best variant, so that this book, with the one or two other volumes which will follow, may, perhaps, form a representative collection of Indian fairy tales.

Bombay 1946.

M.R.A.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

After the writing of his epic novels and long short stories, Leo Tolstoy felt the need to retell the stories told him by the folk near Yasnaya Polyana.

The simplicity, the vitality, and the abandon, of the folk imagination was the source of the Greek chorus.

The Gods, heroes, demons, witches, fairies, birds, beasts and flowers in the folk tales of India, were the overflow from an anonymous pool of imaginative literature of our people.

I go to these sources again and again, in order to bring back the gift of laughter and tears, which is necessary in order to bear the yoke of pity that every writer must carry.

On re-reading the stories retold here, I felt impelled to render *More Indian Fairy Tales*, already published in a volume of the same size as this.

I promise to render *Still More Indian Fairy Tales* in the near future.

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ONCE upon a time, there lived a mighty wrestler in Persia. One day, some one who had travelled to India told him that there was a wrestler in Hindustan mightier than he. The Persian wrestler's pride was hurt. He, at once, decided to go and challenge the Indian. So he went to the bazaar and, buying a hundred thousand pounds weight of wheat flour, put it in a bundle on his head and set off.

By evening he had reached the edge of a lake on the borders of Hindustan. He was feeling rather hungry and thirsty. So he knelt beside the lake and, putting his mouth

to it, half emptied it of water with one gulp. From the rest he made a porridge by emptying some of his flour. With this he satisfied his hunger. Then he fell asleep.

Now an elephant used to come to drink at the lake every morning. When he came at dawn the next day he found the lake empty. 'What shall I do,' he asked himself, 'there is no water to be found for a thousand miles anywhere...' He was going away disappointed when he espied the wrestler, sleeping comfortably on the edge of the lake. He knew at once from the proportions of the wrestler's body that he had drunk all the water. So he rushed angrily and trampled upon the man's head. But the wrestler only turned on his side and said : 'Not so gently, my headache won't be cured by such soft pats on the head. If you want to press my head, press it more vigorously.'

The elephant stood back angry, when he saw that his stamping had not hurt the wrestler. Then he thought: 'I will teach this brute a lesson. I shall eat him up. But the wrestler who was now getting up to continue his journey, caught hold of the elephant by the waist and, wrapping him in his blanket, swung him over his shoulder and started off for India.

A few strides and he reached the house of his rival. He shouted for him: 'Come out, O you, Rustum of Hind, come and give me a fall !'

'He is not at home,' answered the Indian wrestler's wife shyly. 'He has gone to fetch some fuel from the jungle.'

'All right, I will call back again, 'but please accept this present I have brought for him.' And he threw the bundle



containing the elephant over the wall of the mudhouse into the courtyard.

‘Oh mother, mother, look, this rival of your son has thrown a rat into our house,’ exclaimed the Indian wrestler’s wife.

‘Never mind, child,’ came the voice of the Indian wrestler’s mother. ‘Never you care. My son will teach him better manners soon. Just put a trap and catch the rat. We will throw it away.’

The Persian wrestler heard all this and thought: ‘Well, if the huge body of an elephant appears like a rat to the Indian wrestler’s wife, what will I look like to the wrestler.’ But he mustered up courage and went in search of his rival in the jungle. He had only taken a few steps when he saw the Indian wrestler coming home with a thousand cart-loads of fuel on his head. ‘Here’s a worthy match, indeed,’ thought the Persian wrestler: ‘May I be your sacrifice, friend’, he shouted, ‘I have heard of your fame and I have come from Persia to fight you.’

‘Welcome, with all my heart,’ replied the Indian wrestler. ‘I will give you a fight. But let us do it in the city amphitheatre before an audience. What is the fun of fighting without applause?’

‘But I am in a hurry to get back,’ said the Persian. ‘So come, let us have done with it here and now. As for the audience look there is an old woman toddling along. I will go and ask her to come and watch.’ Saying this he shouted: ‘O mother! O mother! stop and watch our contest!’

‘I can’t, my son, I can’t,’ replied the lady, ‘for my

daughter there has stolen my camels and I am running to catch her. But if you like to come and wrestle on the palms of my hands, I shall be willing to judge the match as I go along.'

The wrestlers jumped on to the palm of the old woman's right hand and came to grips, while she sped along over the hills and dales.



When the old woman's daughter saw her in the distance, with two hefty wrestlers struggling to throw each other, on her hand, she was very frightened. She thought they were the soldiers her mother had brought to catch her. But when she saw that they were only two wrestlers, she caught hold of both her mother and the wrestlers. Tying them with the hundred and sixty camels she was driving, all in a bundle, and putting the package on her head, she set off.

One of the camels, however, was hungry. Putting his head out of the bundle he began to make a noise. The old woman's daughter just plucked a tree or two and thrust the wood for fodder into his mouth.

Upon this the farmer who owned the field raised an alarm, shouting: 'Thief, thief, stop the thief.'

The girl did not like this disturbance. So she bundled the farmer, his field, his ox, his horse and his plough all in the blanket, and ran. Soon she reached a town and felt hungry. So she picked up a baker's shop and all the town too, in her bundle and made off.

At last, she came to a field where there was a big water melon growing. As she was feeling thirsty, she broke it into two and ate the marrow. Then she put her bundle into the rind and, pillowing it under her head, fell asleep.

A big flood arose while she lay asleep and carried off the melon till it floated to the edge of the sea. The top rind fell off. Out walked the old woman, the wrestlers, the camels, the trees, the farmer, the oxen, the horse, the plough, the baker and all the other things. And that was how the world began.



ONCE upon a time, there was a young prince who ruled among a tribe of cowherds, in the plains of Hindustan. Krishna was his name. He was exceedingly handsome. His body was the hue of twilight, his face like the radiant moon, and he played a magic flute, which captured the hearts of men and beasts as the chant of the she-centaurs conquers the sea and sky, or the tremors of the dying thunder master the hearts of the mountains.

All the maidens of the land nursed in their breasts the secret desire to be his loves. They would sport with

him, their curls wreathed with jasmine, their necks laden with cassia, their hands holding sweet lotuses of a pure white bloom, as innocent as their tender hearts bursting with adoration.

One Radha, a delicate maid, was Krishna's favourite. Her worship was so deep and intense that her lover could see it as you could sense the perfume of a blossom from its pollen. So he married her, and took her to live in a fairy palace, with terraces paved with crystal, and arrayed with ponds that mirrored the stars.

One day an old shrivelled-up woman came and knocked at Krishna's palace door. On being admitted, she asked if she could be taken into service as she was hungry and poor and knew not where to go. Radha took pity on her. Giving her clothes and food, she engaged her to do the housework. But she did not know that the old woman was a witch who had been struck by Krishna's beauty and had set her heart on being his wife instead of Radha.

A few days passed. During this time, the old woman acquired an intimate knowledge of the ways of the palace. Then she thought the time was ripe for her to set about realising her desire. She planned to have Radha killed by Krishna himself. So she went and butchered a goat. At night she stole into the room where Radha lay asleep and painted the goat's blood all over the princess' face. Then she waited until the dawn came. Going to Krishna, she asked him to come and see that the wife he had married was a demon who ate men and animals alive. Krishna, seeing blood on Radha's face, really thought he had married a



demon. Drawing his sword, he cut her into pieces and had her buried in a dense forest.

Now, Radha's soul was clean and holy like a temple. After her death it assumed the form of a beautiful palace building. Her arms and legs became marble pillars. Her head became a dome on which her dark tresses, wreathed with flowers, traced themselves like delicate tendrils, and her trunk was changed into a pond of clear crystal nectar, in which the whole temple rested. Her eyes were transformed into a pair of doves which sat in a porch of the edifice in the wilderness, cooing softly through the live-long day.

Krishna was out hunting in the forest one day. Having drifted from his companions, he became lost among the dense and tangled growth of the vegetation about him. As evening fell, he wandered about, till, to his surprise, he saw a beautiful temple in the midst of the forlorn wilderness. He thought he would rest there till the next day. Tying his horse to a tree and giving it enough grass to eat, he himself gathered and ate fruit from the trees. Then he went



to the temple and lay down under the porch to sleep. He had hardly closed his eyes when he heard a fluttering of wings above him. Looking up, he saw two gentle doves come and sit down side by side and begin to talk :

‘This is the cruel man who cut his wife to pieces,’ he heard the male dove say, ‘just because a malicious witch came and told him a lie.’

‘But can’t he find his wife again,’ asked the wife dove. ‘He was too trustful. He was deceived and it was not altogether his fault.’

‘True, it was not all his fault’ replied the male dove. ‘He was deceived. And perhaps he can find his wife, but he does not know how to.’

‘Tell me how he can find her?’ asked the female dove with madonna pity.

‘Well,’ replied the male dove, ‘his wife and her companions come to bathe in the tank of nectar at midnight. She wears a scarlet sari, and her friends wear saffron robes. If he would go and steal their dresses and tease them, his

wife would recognise from his playful tricks that he is her husband, and she would marry him again.'

Krishna heard every word of what the male dove said. He lay, counting the moments uneasily, till midnight came. Then he went to the doors of the temple. Hiding himself



behind it, truly he saw Radha with her maids come laughing and dancing. They unclasped the girdle-knots, loosened their saris and tossing them away, jumped into the pool of nectar. Love made Krishna wanton-handed. Stealing by the edges of the pond and lifting the robes of the maids, he climbed up to a pipal tree which stood near. Then he took out his flute and with it so charmed the hearts of the lovely maidens that they looked at him amazed, with shame. They recognised him, Krishna, their lover.



With joined hands and eyes down-cast, smiles hovering on their lips, they implored him: 'O give us back our clothes, which you have hung on the branch of the pipal tree, beloved.'

But he threw tender twigs at them by the handful, and teased them by whistling evasive little answers on his flute.

'Oh give us back our clothes, beloved, and we will give you our love,' they entreated, when they knew he was bent on sport.

'A kiss from each maid is the ransom I charge, while I want Radha in marriage,' he sang back.

The dancers' girdles tinkled with their dancing, and their hands were not wearied by the sports of love, as, during the moonlit night, they tarried to pay the ransom of a kiss to their Lord, and waited to see Krishna and Radha married.



ONCE upon a time when the world was young, the Sun, the Moon and the Wind went to dine with their uncle and aunt, Thunder and Lightning. Their mother, the Sky, blessed them, and wishing them a merry party, waited alone for their return.

Now, both the Sun and the Wind were very greedy and selfish little boys. They ate all the sumptuous food that was given to them by their uncle and aunt, without any thought of their poor hungry mother who was sitting at home praying that they be happy and enjoy themselves

at the party. The gentle little Moon alone did not forget her mother. Of every dainty dish that was put before her she kept a little to take away to her mother.

‘Well, children, what have you brought for me?’ said the mother of the Sun, the Moon and the Wind, when they returned home at night.





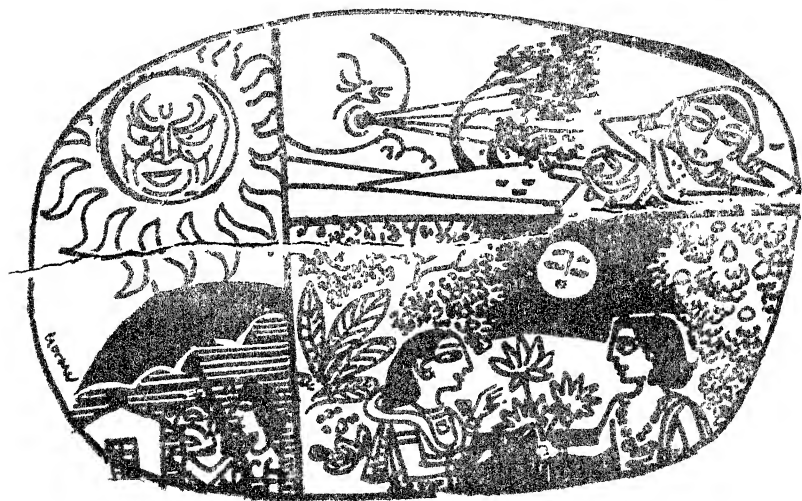
‘What do you mean, woman?’ asked the Sun, who was her eldest child, insolently. ‘What do you expect me to bring for you? I went to dinner to eat and enjoy myself, not on an errand to bring food for you. Besides, you could not appreciate such delicacies as we were given, with your coarse ways of eating.’

‘Quite,’ echoed the little brat Wind, ‘you don’t know how to eat, nor can you, because you have no teeth in your mouth! And how can you expect us to spoil our fashionable clothes by stuffing our pockets up with food for you? Moreover, it is rude to fill our hankies with food. It is not done in the best circles. But how should a peasant know the price of jewels? What should you know of manners, good or bad?’

‘Don’t be so rude, brutes,’ interrupted the docile Moon, ‘it seems you don’t know manners, talking to your mother like that!’ Then, consoling the old woman she said: ‘Mother, taste this dinner I have brought for you. It is a little of everything we were given.’

‘May you live long, my moon child,’ said the old woman. And she ~~turned indignantly to her sons~~: ‘The curses of Heaven shall fall on your two heads. You my eldest, you went out to feast and never thought of your old mother, although she slaves for you all day, you shall roast in eternal fire; your rays shall be scorching hot and shall burn all they touch, and men shall hate you when you appear in your pride! And you, my little scamp Wind, you who are so greedy and selfish, you will always blow in dry weather and shall parch or shrivel all that you touch, and men shall detest you when you are about! And you, my sweet daughter, you who thought of your mother, you shall flourish always; you shall be cool, calm, soft and beautiful; men shall be full of love when they see you; and they shall sing to you and call you blessed.’

That is why the Sun is hated when it shines too hotly;
the Wind despised when it blows strongly; and the Moon
so loved by all.





EVERY twelve years, in a town near the place where the Ganges falls into the plains, a fair is held to which come the rich and the poor from all parts of Hindustan. To one of these fairs came a king with his daughter.

Now, it so happened that this king and his daughter pitched their tents opposite to the place where a young prince lay encamped. One day, as this prince was going out to the temple to worship, what was his surprise but to hear an exquisite melody, honeyed with words of love, steal into his ears. For days afterwards, however much he



tried, he could not forget this tune. Woefully he sat down to pray that he should forget it, but the tender strain of the strings that had come to his ears on the wings of song, haunted his imagination. Some days later, however, when he had given up all hope of forgetting it or of tracking it to its source, he saw in the camp opposite him, lying on a couch in the garden, the lonesome form of a beauteous maiden, before whose face the cold moon's visage in its effulgence dwindled in shame.

'Oh, how beautiful she is, I wish I could talk to her,' he thought.

Luckily for him, at the same time the princess saw him and thought to herself: 'Perchance he is the idol for



which my heart has yearned, for whom the tear-dewed strings of my lute have drawn music from me, for whom my love is meant.'

After that each of them waited for the sight of the other as the musical instrument waits for the song. But though they saw each other, longing to meet, the gulf that severed them could not be bridged.

When the fair was over, the father of the princess ordered the servants to prepare to depart. The prince watching the stir in the camp of his beloved realised that the love that flowed from her to him and from him to her would soon cease to flow. He stood wondering what to do, when, suddenly, he saw for the last time, the lady of his love



open the curtains of the palanquin in which she was seated, bite a lotus, put it on her ear and let it drop. Then she drew the curtains and was borne away.

The broken-hearted prince did not know what that meant. 'It must be a message,' he thought, 'and yet I don't know what it means. I do not know her name, or her father's name or that of the country where she comes from.'

Afflicted with the grief of love he went back to his own land and lay sick in a dark chamber, day and night, refusing to eat or drink. His father and mother were very unhappy when they saw this. They asked him what had happened. 'Nothing,' he would say. He would not even see the physicians who came to diagnose his disease, but lay nursing the secret of his love.

Now the son of the Prime Minister of the State was a very great friend of the prince. They had been to school

together and were constant companions. When the Prime Minister's son missed the prince at court, he came to inquire what had happened to him. He found the prince lying in bed.

'What is the matter with you?' he asked.

'Nothing,' said the prince, and he was listless and apathetic.

The Prime Minister's son, however, knew the prince was in love and consoling him said: 'If you tell me all about your illness, I will help you.'

'Well,' confided the prince after he had been pressed long enough, 'at the fair on the banks of the Ganges, there came a king to live opposite my camp, a king who had a most beautiful daughter. I heard her sing one day and fell in love with her. Then I used to see her every day, but I never dared to talk to her. After a month's stay she went away with her father. Now I don't even know her name, or the name of her father, or the name of her country.'

'Oh, that is simple,' said the son of the Prime Minister, 'I will take you to her. You get up and dress and eat and then we will go.'

'How can you take me to her, when you don't know her name, or the name of her father, or the name of her country?' enquired the prince.

'Never you mind,' answered the Prime Minister's son. 'You get up and dress and have your dinner and I will take you to her.'

The prince got up at once, and attended to himself. He ate his food and then he was ready to go.

‘Did the princess say anything or do anything before she went away?’ asked the son of the Prime Minister.

‘Yes, she had a lotus in her hand,’ said the Prince, ‘which she first bit, then put round her ear, and let fall into the dust.’

‘Oh, then her name is the Princess Lotus,’ said the Prime Minister’s son. ‘Come, I will take you to her.’

The prince went to his parents and told them that he wanted to go away to another country for a change of air. Knowing he had been ill, and thinking a change of air would do him good, they readily permitted him to go.

The prince and the Prime Minister’s son mounted their horses and set off together. In each country they passed through, they asked whether a princess named Lotus lived there. But no princess of that name was to be found on the shores of the sea. Meeting an old woman, they asked her whether a princess named Lotus lived there.

‘The name of the daughter of the king of this land is indeed Lotus,’ informed the old woman, ‘and I am her god-mother. I was her nurse and she grew up on my milk.’

The Prime Minister’s son was very clever. He asked the old woman if she could lodge them in her house. The woman saw that they were two handsome young princes, and agreed to let them stay with her.

When they had been staying at the old woman’s house for some days, the Prime Minister’s son told the whole story: how his friend, the prince, had fallen in love with the Princess Lotus. He asked her to go and tell her god-child, that her lover was longing for her.



The old woman felt very sorry for the prince, whom she had seen distracted with love ever since he came. She went and delivered the message of the Prime Minister's son. The princess was very pleased and told her to ask the prince to come and see her under the terrace of her palace in the garden at night.

The Prime Minister's son safely conducted the prince to the appointed place and himself waited outside to see that nobody should come to know of this. The prince's joy knew no bounds when he met his beloved. And he came to see her every night for a week. Then he asked her to marry him. The princess told him she would ask the permission of her father and mother.

The next day she went to her parents and told them that she had fallen in love with a young prince, who lived in her nurse's house and wanted to marry him. Her parents called the prince to the palace. Seeing how handsome he was and how brave he looked, they consented to marry their daughter to him.

The wedding took place amid great rejoicings. The Prime Minister's son attended the ceremony, but, after that, while the prince went to live at the palace of his wife, he continued to live at the old nurse's house.

At first the prince was very happy. Then, after some months, he began to miss his friend, the Prime Minister's son, and felt sad.

'What is the matter?' asked his wife, when she saw him dejected.

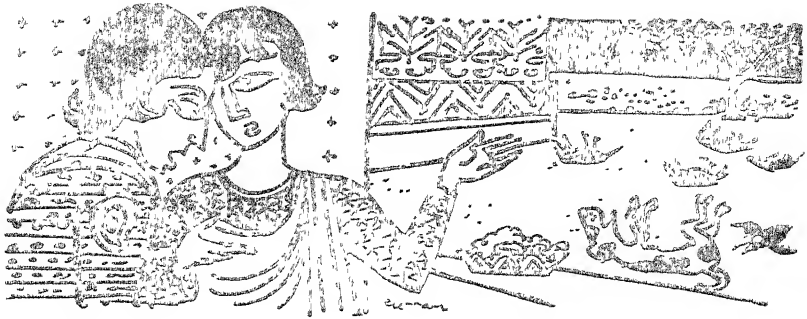
'I am sad,' he said, 'because I have not seen my friend for so long.'

'Go and see him then,' she said, 'it is very easy.'

So the prince went to see the Prime Minister's son. He was so happy to see him after so long an interval that he stayed a whole week with him.

Now when he went back after a week, the princess was very angry because he had stayed away from her for so long. The prince told her he could not come back earlier, as he had so much to say to his friend after the months of separation, and because he liked him. But the princess would not listen to his excuses.

Soon, however, she was reconciled with her husband and for a month they were very happy again. But then,



again, the prince felt sad, and wanted to go and see his friend.

‘All right,’ said the princess, ‘go and see him.’ Giving him some sweets, she said, ‘take these for him as a present from me.’

The prince gave the sweets to his friend saying that the princess, his wife, had specially made them for him. The Prime Minister’s son put the sweets aside and said he would eat them later. On the prince insisting that he should eat them at once, his friend said : ‘Look, I will show you a miracle.’ He broke some of the sweets and threw the pieces to the crows in the courtyard. As soon as the birds pecked at the bits, what was the prince’s surprise: to find that they fell dead. A stray dog who came and smelt the food also died.

When the prince saw this, he was full of rage. He decided that he would never go back to the wicked princess who had sought to kill his friend.

A month passed. The Prime Minister's son tried to persuade the prince to go back to his wife. But he was adamant.

'If you would like to see another miracle,' suggested the Prime Minister's son, at last, 'then go to your wife and while she is asleep take off all her jewellery and bring it to me. But before you come back, pierce her foot with a trident.'

The prince went to the palace and did as his friend had directed him. When the princess awoke and found herself bereft of all her jewellery, she raised a hue and cry. Her parents came and she told them that she had been robbed. The king at once ordered soldiers to ransack the whole town and bring the culprit to his presence.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's son put on the clothes of an ascetic and, dressing the prince up as his disciple, asked him to go to the bazaar and sell the jewels. He himself went and sat by the river.

As the prince was selling the ornaments, the soldiers caught him. They asked him how he came by the jewellery.

'I am no thief,' said the prince; 'My teacher, a holy man, gave them to me to sell.'

'Where is this holy man?' they asked, 'lead us to him.' The prince took them to the river.

'What is all this? Are you a mendicant or a thief?' shouted the soldiers when they saw the Prime Minister's son who was disguised as a yogi. 'Tell us where you got these jewels?'

'I am a mendicant,' answered the prince's friend, 'and

no thief. The way I came by the jewellery is this : Last night I was sitting here when a woman came. She took a dead body out of the river and began to eat it. This made me angry. I ran after her and wounded her with my trident in the feet. Her jewellery fell off as she ran for her life. I picked it up. I did not know it was your king's daughter.'

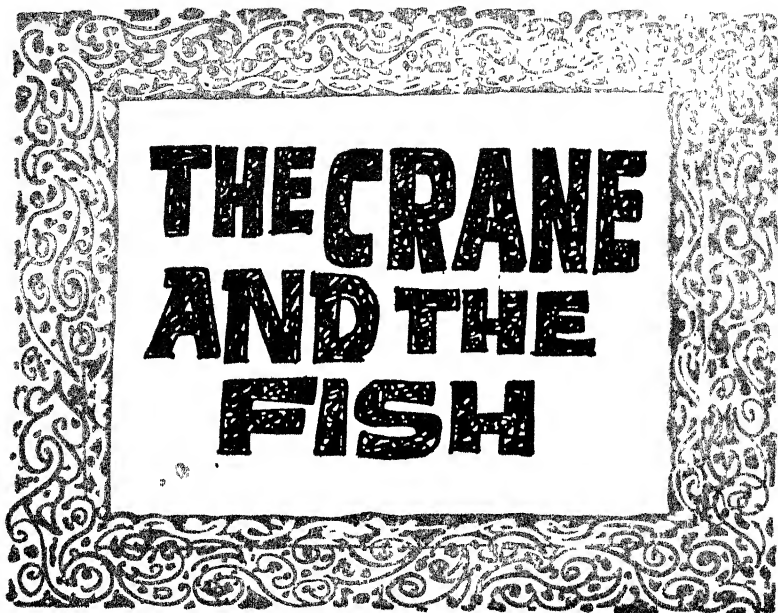
The soldiers took the ornaments to the king and told him all that the mendicant had said. The king forthwith made enquiries. He found that his daughter had, indeed, received a trident wound on her feet.

'Let her be banished from my kingdom,' ordered the king. 'She is a demon born in my house.' The soldiers took the princess and left her in the jungle among the wild beasts.

The Prime Minister's son and the prince returned to the old woman's house. Then, wearing their ordinary clothes, they went to the forest in search of the Princess Lotus.

'Why did you try to poison me, just because the prince is my friend ?' asked the Prime Minister's son when they found her.

The Princess Lotus wept and cried and repented her crime. So they all went back to her father's country to live happily ever afterwards.



THE CRANE AND THE FISH

IN the centre of a beautiful vale, in the north of Hindustan, is a lake whose stony banks seem built of emerald, and whose rippling waves are like sapphires shining in the sun. Here lived the largest number of fishes and crabs and other little beings.

Once upon a time, there came a Crane from beyond the seas—an adventurer, who had heard a great deal about the riches and the beauty of this pool. When she found that the lake was a good hunting ground for food, she went to the Crocodile who was the king of the place, and asked



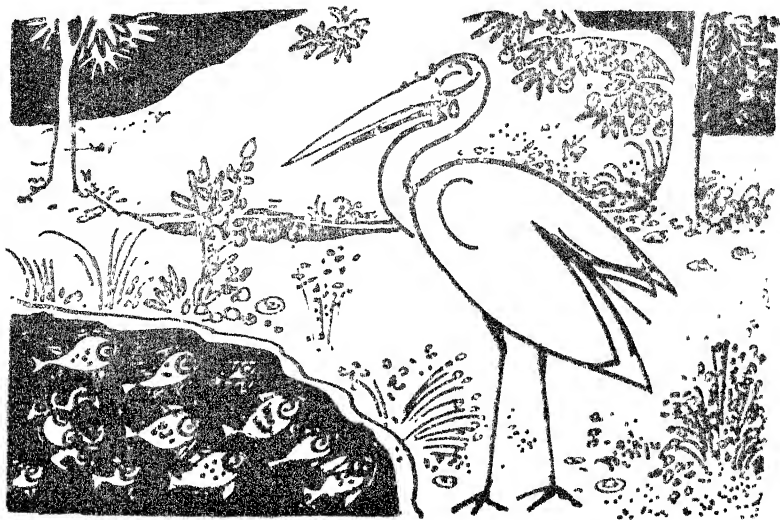
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him for leave to settle down on the banks to do a little trade in the spices which grew on the land. Coo, coo, coo, she crooned to the king, flattering him with sweet compliments. The king, who was a weak fickle ruler given to the pleasures of wine and love, liked the praise, accepted the presents she offered him, and gave her a charter to trade in his realms.

But soon the king died and his son succeeded him; he in turn dying, his son succeeded him. Now this new monarch was a tyrannical fanatic and several rebellions broke out against him, some of his nobles proclaiming themselves independent rulers of different parts of the kingdom.

The Crane had so far kept up a show of doing trade all this time, although really, watching the millions of fish



in the lake, she hungered to eat them. The disturbances in the kingdom offered her a golden opportunity.

She took sides with one noble in his war against another, pretending to be very friendly with the party she supported, but really trying to acquire an intimate knowledge of ways of war in this land. When the internecine wars of the various nobles had weakened them, the Crane declared her desire to end the conflict and to bring peace and prosperity to the kingdom. This she would do if they made her Empress of the land, she said, at least till such time as the fishes were able to rule themselves.

The poor fish believed the Crane, especially as she did not want to hurt their religious susceptibilities. But they

did not know that every day the Empress devoured many of them in secret and sent home a great deal of the wealth of their country, while she kept on telling them that she was merely interested in their welfare.

Some time elapsed and the Crane grew more and more greedy, till one day she thought she would devour all the fishes. So she pretended to be very sad and dejected.

Her subjects came to her and asked her what was the matter.

‘A twelve-year famine is coming,’ she replied, ‘not a drop of water will remain in the land and you will all die. If you want to be saved let me carry you out of this water into a lake far away!’

The fishes were very touched by the anxious solicitude of their monarch for them and, thanking her most gracious majesty, requested her to save them from the impending doom. Thereupon the Crane took them one by one in her beak and, while pretending to transport them to the other lake, gobbled them all up.

When she had eaten all the population of the pool, came the turn of a Crab. She offered to take him away, too.

‘But how will you take me?’ he asked.

‘Just as I took the fish, in my beak, of course,’ replied the Crane.

Now the Crab was a very cautious fellow. He knew that the beak of the Crane was not very far from its stomach. ‘If she really put me into the other pond,’ he thought, ‘it would be excellent, but if she doesn’t, what then?’ So he said to her:

‘Your majesty, I don’t think you will be able to hold me tight enough, but we Crabs have a famous grip. If you will let me catch hold of you round the neck, I shall be glad to go with you.’

The Crane was rather slow-witted and did not see the meaning of it all. So she let the Crab catch hold of her neck and went off.

When they had gone a little way the Crane stopped and began to try to catch the Crab in her beak.

‘What are you doing?’ asked the Crab.

‘Nothing,’ replied the Crane, ‘my neck is rather strained by your weight, so I want to relieve it by holding you in my beak.’

‘No, no,’ said the Crab. ‘I shall fall to pieces if you should accidentally drop me while shifting me over from your neck to your mouth.’

‘It does not matter if you fall,’ said the Crane. ‘You have got to die sooner or later. If you don’t get killed by being dropped, you will be chewed up in my mouth very soon, for do you see those bones there? That is all that remains of your brothers and sisters.’

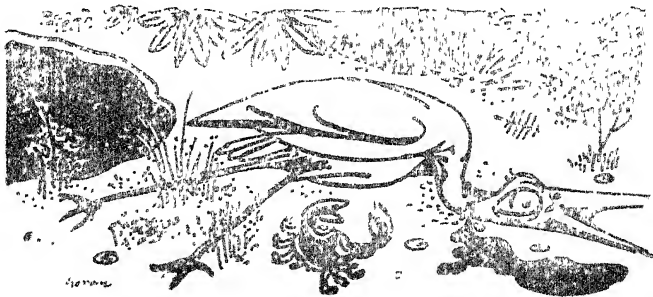
‘You are very clever,’ said the Crab, ‘but I am not such a fool as those fishes. For I have got you by the neck, and I shall cut it in two if you extend your beak towards me.’

At this the cruel Crane knew she had been outwitted and sobbed and cried:

‘O noble Crab, I was only joking with you. Pray don’t take offence at what I said. I will not eat you.’

‘All right’, said the Crab, ‘come and put me into the lake from where you brought me.’

The Crane turned round and brought the Crab back to the pool. When she was putting him down, however, she felt a sharp shooting pain in her throat. The Crab had cut her throat. As she stood dying she heard the Crab say: ‘The end of a wicked king is sudden.’





ONCE upon a time, there was a King of India, named Vikramaditya, who ruled from his capital at Ujjain. He had a Prime Minister named Butti, whom he liked very much, because he and Butti, who had been left orphans while they were yet small children, had since lived together, played together, gone to school together and grown up together, like brothers. And they were both very good rulers, the King so gracious that no one who ever came to his doors to beg for food or clothes went away empty-handed; the Prime Minister so sagacious that no one who came to seek

justice at court went away disappointed. The King, however, had a very warm and ardent imagination. It was only because Butti, the Prime Minister, supplemented his master's noble vision with a sound and practical work, that the kingdom flourished and prospered, so well as it did.

Now, in a country, a little way from Ujjain, lived a rich and beautiful princess, named the Pomegranate Queen. Her father and mother had built a fairy palace for her in a lovely garden. In the middle of it they planted a pomegranate tree which bore three large pomegranates. These pomegranates opened in the centre, and in each of them was a little bed. On one of them slept the princess Pomegranate, and on each of the other two, one of her two maids. Early every morning the pomegranate tree bent its branches to the ground; the fruits opened, the Pomegranate Queen and her maids crept out to play in the cool shade of the tree till the evening; and each evening the boughs bent down again to enable the princess and the ladies to enter into their tiny, snug bedrooms again.

The fame of the Pomegranate princess had spread for and wide, for truly she was the most beautiful lady on the face of the earth. Her hair was black as a raven's wings, her eyes like the eyes of a shy gazelle, her teeth like two rows of glistening pearls, and her cheeks the rich red of pomegranates. And many a noble prince wished to marry her. But her parents had had a hedge of sharp bayonets fixed round the garden where she lived. Several kings and princess and noblemen had tried to break into this walled palace, but in vain.

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One day as he lay asleep in his palace, Raja Vikram had a dream in which his father appeared to him and asked him to go to a tower of lights, which stood outside a temple in the jungle.

‘There is a huge treasure buried underneath the tower’, the image in the dream told Vikram. ‘But you can only

get to it if you first go and offer prayers to Ganpati, the god of wealth, then, fastening a rope to the top of the tower, descend along it, head downwards. When you are about to reach the ground cut off the rope. There is a hedge of bayonets surrounding a garden at the foot of the tower. If you fall on it you may be instantly killed; but Ganpati is merciful and will guard you against all harm, and once you enter the garden you will get the treasure.

Raja Vikram woke up from his dream, rather startled. Going to his Prime Minister, he told him what he had dreamt

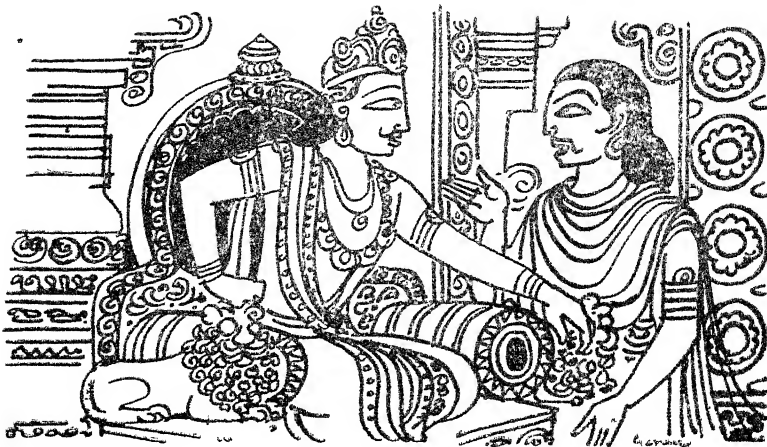
‘Do exactly what your father has suggested to you,’ said Butti, when he heard the King’s tale.

Raja Vikram decided to follow his father’s advice in the dream.

‘But how shall I escape being killed on the hedge,’ he asked, ‘because before I reach the ground I shall be caught on the bayonets.’

‘That is easy,’ said Butti ‘I will twist the rope round, you begin to descend along it, and let it untwist when you are half way. In this way you will fall clear of the hedge of bayonets.’

They both went then to the tower of lights and Butti twisted the rope as Vikram held it. When the Raja was half way down, the Prime Minister untwisted it, so that Vikram fell clear of the bayonets into the garden. He set out to excavate the foundation of the tower. True to the words of his father in the vision, there was a treasure of gold, silver and diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds,



turquoises and pearls, buried there. Vikram gathered together all this wealth and then departed with his Prime Minister. But when he returned to his palace, instead of dissipating his treasure, he brought food to distribute to the poor, because he cared little for the riches for which some men sell their souls and bodies.

A short while later, Vikram's father again appeared in a dream to him and said:

‘My son, if you go to the temple daily and read the holy books devoutly you will learn in that way to be very wise; and it is good to be wise because the thieves can rob you of wealth if you have any, but no one can take your wisdom away from you.’

When the Raja awoke from his sleep, he went and told Butti what he had dreamt. The Prime Minister said the

advice which his father had given him was very good and that he should act on it.

So Vikram began to go to the temple daily. Sitting at the feet of the priest, he learnt all the wisdom contained in the holy books.

One day, the priest—who was really God in a human disguise—said to Vikram: ‘My son, I have taught you as much as a mortal should know. Now, you must go. But ask for a boon before you depart; choose what you want most—riches, power, beauty, long life, health, happiness.’

The Raja said he could not decide at once what to ask for, but that he would think over it for a day or two. God, who was disguised as a priest, of course, agreed to this.

Now, it happened that near the temple lived a carpenter’s son, who was very cunning. He had followed Vikram when he went to learn wisdom every day, and thus knew all that God taught the King. When he heard the last conversation between the master and the pupil, he was very curious. So he determined to go and overhear what boon it was for which Vikram asked.

Vikram went straight to Butti to ask his advice with regard to the choice of a boon: ‘I have riches, I have power,’ he said ‘and as for the rest of the virtues, I’d rather take my chance with other men than be unique. What shall I ask for?’

‘Would you like some miraculous power?’ suggested Butti.

‘Yes,’ answered Vikram. ‘I have long desired to have

the power to leave my own body at will and to put my soul into the form of another creature.'

'Well, then, ask for that,' said the Prime Minister.

So next day Raja Vikram set out prepared to ask for the boon. The carpenter's son, who had been lying in wait, went too.

'Have you made up your mind?' asked God¹ when his disciple approached him.

'Yes, holy one,' said Vikram bowing low with humility 'I have thought that I have everything in this world that the heart of man can desire, but there is one thing I lack.'

'Name it, and it is yours,' said God.

'Wise one, give me the power to leave my body,' said Vikram, 'so that I can translate my soul into the body of another being, on this earth, if I like, for as long as I like, and so that my body does not decay, when I depart from it for a while.'

'Your wish is granted,' said God. 'It shall be as you wish.' And he taught Vikram a few *Yoga* verses with which to achieve the translation into any other form he might desire.

The carpenter's son applied his ears but, although he learnt the spell by reciting which one could translate oneself from the original body into the body of another being, he could not hear the magic verses by reciting which the original body could be kept from decomposing.

Soon after Vikram had learnt the spells, he lay asleep one night and again saw his father in a dream.

'There is a beautiful princess who lives in the

pomegranate in the garden with the bayonet hedge,' said the vision, 'go and marry her.'

Vikram went to Butti as soon as he awoke from his dream and told him what his father had said.

'Go and marry the princess,' advised Butti.

'But how can I enter the garden across the bayonet hedge? My father never said I could use the rope this time.'

'Why not use your newly acquired magic knowledge?' suggested the wise Butti. 'Translate yourself into a parrot, then you could fly over the hedge of bayonets, bite off the stalk of pomegranates and bring them home in your beak.'

'Excellent, my clever Butti,' said Vikram. He picked up a dead parrot that lay on the ground and, transporting his soul into it, flew off to the garden. Soon he brought back the three pomegranates in which the Pomegranate Queen and her maids slept.

Then he recited the magic verses, translated his soul back to his own body, and married the Pomegranate Queen.





Everyone was astonished at the beauty of the Queen, and Butti was very happy to think that the Raja's adventure had succeeded.

For a time Vikram lived happily with his wife and ruled his State. Then he felt the urge for adventure coming on to him.

'I must go and see a little more of the world,' he said to Butti one day.

'What about your young wife and your people?' asked Butti, 'Who will take care of them?'

'I will leave them to you,' said Vikram, 'but I must go and use this miraculous power I have to assume other forms.'

'It shall be as you wish,' said Butti, 'you are my master, and I must obey you.'

So Vikram translated his soul into the body of a parrot and flew off.

Now, the carpenter's son heard of this. He thought it would be a good thing to go and use the formula which he had overheard at the temple. He went to where Vikram's body lay, therefore, and recited the verses. Lo! his original body fell dead as he entered the King's body.

Everybody who saw Vikram's body moving about in the palace thought the king had only swooned and recovered. But Butti, the king's wise Prime Minister, at once guessed that some one had learnt the magic spell which God had taught Vikram. So he went to the Pomegranate Queen. Telling her of his suspicions, he asked her to cook some very coarse food in the evening and set it before the King. As Vikram ate only very delicate dishes, the surest way of knowing whether this man was Vikram or a pretender, was to ascertain if he would or would not eat bad food.

The Pomegranate Queen did exactly as Butti advised. The man was, indeed, a pretender for he greedily ate all the



bad food that she offered him. And she went to Butti and told him.

‘I feel convinced he is not Vikram,’ she said to Butti. ‘What can we do?’

‘We will put him into prison,’ said Butti. ‘When he finds the life of a Raja not as agreeable as he anticipated, he will soon renounce the body he has chosen to inhabit and return to his original self.’

The carpenter’s son was thus put into a dungeon. Since he only knew the magic spell by which he could get into another body but not the formula with which to keep his original body from decomposing, his corpse had decayed, so he had to remain where he was.

Meanwhile, in the form of a parrot, Vikram had flown across many hills and dales into a wild forest, where on an old banyan tree lived a thousand other parrots. He made friends with them and took up his abode among them. Every day he went out in search of food with them; every night he returned to rest in the old hoary banyan tree.

One day, a hunter who had found no game all day and was tired, came to rest under the banyan tree. He heard the swarm of one thousand and one parrots overhead. ‘Oh what a good bag of prey they would be,’ he thought; and he decided to climb up the banyan to catch some of the birds. But the trunk of the tree and its branches were slippery. So he fell down every time he tried to mount it. He was very disappointed and went away not, however, without forming the intention to return another day.

The parrots lived happily for some time. Then, one morning, as they were flying about in search of food a strong shower of rain fell and drove them homewards. On arriving near their nests, they found that a swarm of one thousand and one crows had taken shelter in the banyan tree.

‘Let’s drive them away,’ said Vikram to his companions. ‘because they will throw the seeds in their mouth to the ground underneath. Then trees and plants will grow up, from which anybody could reach the tall boughs of our banyan tree and catch us.’

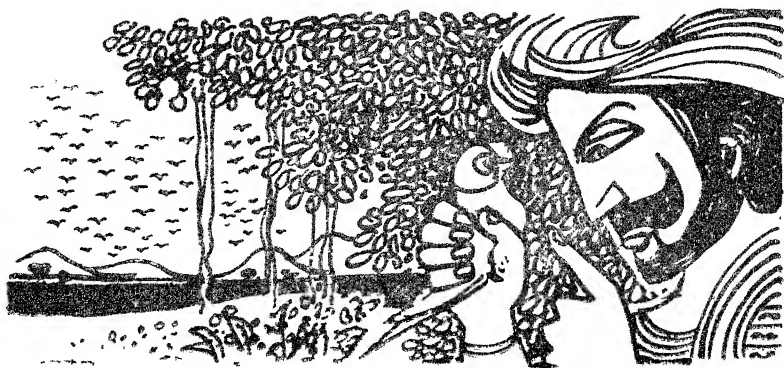
But the other parrots laughed at Vikram, saying he had very absurd ideas.

‘We can’t drive away the crows,’ they declared, ‘they will get soaked through, in the rain.’

But it was as Vikram had foretold. The seeds from the fruits in the crows’ bills fell on the ground under the banyan tree. Soon some tall plants grew up, from which it was easy to climb up to every nest in the banyan.

When the disappointed hunter passed that way, he saw the new growth under the banyan and rejoiced to think he could now catch the parrots. While they were away, he climbed up and set a snare on the banyan tree. Of course, when the parrots came back that evening, they were all caught by the feet and cried: ‘Crick! crick! crick! Oh what shall we do! Crick! crick! crick! O Vikram, you were right and we were wrong! But tell us what can we do? Crick! crick! crick!’

‘Did I not tell you, fools, it would be so!’ replied Vikram. ‘Now, there is only one thing you can do to get



out of it. As soon as the hunter comes up to catch you, throw your head sideways and pretend that you are dead. He will throw you on the ground. When all the thousand and one of us are released from the snare in this way, make a swift flight into the air before the hunter climbs down.'

'Excellent, excellent,' all the pollies agreed; and they did as Vikram had advised. The hunter came up. Finding all of them with their heads hanging down, he extricated them one by one and threw them on the ground. At last, it was the turn of Vikram to be released from the snare and thrown down. But as fate would have it, the knife in the hunter's hands slipped at that moment and fell with a thud on the ground, thus frightening all the parrots below into flying away. Poor Vikram was left imprisoned.

'You little wretch,' shouted the hunter to Vikram discomfited. 'You looked a stranger among these birds and surely you are responsible for this trick. Now I will strangle you for your mischief and teach you a lesson.'

‘You were a big fool to be deceived by me,’ answered Vikram, ‘and you will be a bigger fool, if now, you strangle me. I am so handsome and brave. Why don’t you sell me for a thousand gold mohurs?’

The hunter was very astonished to hear the parrot talk so sensibly, but he wondered who would buy it for a thousand gold coins.

‘Don’t look so silly,’ insisted Vikram. ‘Come and hawk me about in the city and you will surely get a thousand gold mohurs for me.’

Stung by the parrot’s reproach, the hunter abandoned all sense of caution and went crying: ‘Who’ll buy, who’ll buy this pretty polly? Who’ll buy, who’ll buy this handsome polly?’

Several people were attracted by the sight of the bird. As soon as they heard that it was priced at a thousand gold mohurs, they laughed and passed by, saying: ‘No fool in his dreams ever paid so much for a little polly.’

After hawking about all day, the hunter was tired and disgusted. Turning to his prisoner he said: ‘I told you, no one would ever pay a thousand gold coins, however handsome you may be. Now, I’ll go and strangle you and cook a nice curry with your meat, for I am very hungry.’

‘Oh, don’t do that,’ begged Vikram. ‘Try once again. Look, there, I see a rich merchant coming. I think he will buy me.’

So the hunter hawked once again:

‘Who’ll buy, who’ll buy this pretty polly? Who’ll buy, who’ll buy this handsome polly?’

‘How much do you want for him?’ asked the merchant coming up. ‘Two rupees?’

‘No Seth,’ replied the hunter. ‘My price for it is a thousand gold mohurs.’

‘What! A thousand gold mohurs!’ exclaimed the merchant. ‘You are mad. Why you could buy ten acres of land, a home and a herd of a thousand buffaloes for that much.’

‘O wait, merchant, wait,’ shouted the parrot as he saw the indignant customer walking away. ‘Buy me for a thousand gold mohurs and you will see you have not made a bad bargain. And I’ll repay you in some way or another if you buy me and keep me in your shop.’

The merchant was surprised to hear the parrot talk like a real human being and took a fancy to him. So he paid the hunter a thousand gold mohurs and, taking Vikram, went and hung him in his shop.

Now, whoever came to buy things at the merchant’s shop, heard Vikram talk wisely and beautifully. So they came back to buy things there and never went to another shop. Of course, the merchant sold more goods than anybody else, and soon made a thousand times more than he had ever earned before. And so for a long time, Vikram lived with the merchant.

It so happened that in the town where Vikram lived with the merchant, was a very beautiful dancer. She was such an accomplished mistress of her art that she was asked to dance on every festive occasion in the town, such as a marriage or birth.

In this very town, also, lived a poor wood-cutter, who earned a meagre living by collecting sticks in the wood and selling them as fuel in the bazaar.

One day, when the wood-cutter was out in the jungle, he became tired. Falling asleep under the shade of a tree, he dreamt that he was a rich man and had married the famous dancing girl. The dowry he gave her was one thousand gold mohurs. He was much puzzled by this strange vision, and on getting back to the town, told a friend about it.

‘O my friend, do not be by vain imaginings befooled!’ said the wood-cutter’s friend, and dismissed him.

Now, as the wood-cutter was relating the story of his dream to his friend he stood near the house of the dancing girl. She overheard him. ‘That man looked poor, but he must have a thousand gold mohurs,’ she thought, ‘otherwise he would not have talked so glibly about giving them to me, whom he imagined he was going to marry. I’ll see if I can’t get the money from him.’

She at once ordered her servants to go and bring him. When he was brought to her, she cunningly fell at his feet and began to cry: ‘O my husband, O my husband. Where have you been? I have waited for you so long.’

‘I am sure I don’t know what you mean,’ answered the wood-cutter, amazed. ‘I am a poor wood-cutter and you are a great lady. I think you have mistaken me for somebody else.’

‘No, no,’ she answered, clinging to him. ‘How can you be so cruel as to forget me? Don’t you remember the day

when we were married? What a grand wedding it was! And you took me to your palace and promised to give me a thousand gold mohurs as a wedding present! But you forgot to give me the money and went away, and I have been waiting for you ever since.'

The wood-cutter could believe neither his eyes nor his ears. He thought he was dreaming, but the dancing girl's servants declared that it was true.

At last, the wood-cutter could bear it no more. He tried to free himself from the clutches of the dancing girl and her servants to run home. But they held him fast and when the wood-cutter remonstrated with them, there was an uproar and much quarrelling. So strangers came in and advised the parties to take the matter to court.

When the case came before the Judge, he could not decide it and referred it to the King. While the dancing girl claimed that the wood-cutter was her husband, owed her the dowry of one thousand gold coins, and brought witnesses to attest her right, the wood-cutter rejected her evidence, saying he was only a poor labourer who could never afford to marry, and he brought witnesses to support him.

The King did not know what to do to decide this difficult case and everybody wondered what the result would be.

Then, one day, the King heard that a merchant in the town had a very wise parrot, who might decide the issue. Forthwith Vikram was brought to the court.

'Tell me your story, O wood-cutter,' he asked, as he sat in his cage.



The wood-cutter told his story, how he had gone to the wood to collect fuel, how he had fallen asleep, how he dreamt he had married the beautiful dancing girl and had given her a thousand gold coins as a dowry.

‘I was foolish enough to come and relate this to a friend,’ he added. ‘This dancing girl probably heard it and thought fit to persecute me.’

‘Now, tell me your version of the story, dancing girl,’ said Vikram.

The dancing girl gave her version of the story, that was, of course, full of lies, which Vikram proved when trustworthy witnesses were called. Still she insisted that the wood-cutter had the money which he had promised her.

Vikram then ordered an empty glass bottle to be brought to the court, sealed.

‘Open this bottle and discover a thousand gold mohurs in it,’ he said to the dancing girl.

‘But how can I do that,’ she replied, ‘there is no money in it.’

‘Well, then, how can you expect to skin this old man when he has no money to give you,’ asked Vikram.

The dancing girl was nonplussed and went out of court ashamed. So the wood-cutter was set free.

Everyone applauded Vikram for the splendid justice he had administered.

Now, it happened that the dancing girl was very mean and determined to revenge herself on the parrot for putting her to shame before the public. Soon she had an occasion to do so, because she was called to dance at the house of the merchant who owned Vikram, during the festivities that were going on before his son’s marriage. She danced so beautifully that, as she expected, the merchant asked her to choose what she liked out of his house or shop, whether the richest jewel or the costliest cloth.

‘I want that little parrot,’ she said: ‘I have taken a fancy to it.’

The merchant was very vexed to think he should have to give away the one thing which had brought him all his wealth. Of course, he had never for one moment considered it possible that she would ask for his pretty little parrot. But he had given her a promise. So with many tears he handed over Vikram to her.

As soon as she got home, the dancing girl hurried to wreak her vengeance on the polly who had shamed her before the public.

‘Take this parrot away and boil it for my supper,’ she said to her maid. ‘But, first, cut off its head and grill it for me to taste.’

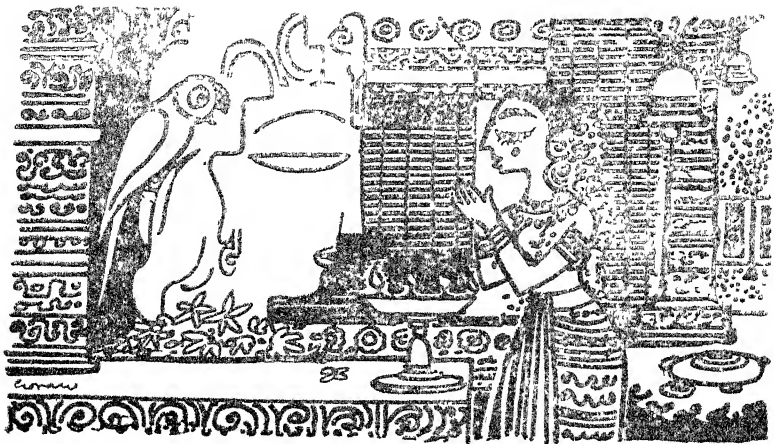
The maid was rather surprised that her mistress should want a dish so unusual as a grilled parrot’s head, but she dared not say anything. She went to the kitchen and got busy plucking the feathers off Vikram’s coat.

Now, Vikram was very clever. He hung his head on one side and pretended he was dead. When the maid servant, thinking he was dead, went to get some water from another room, he rushed into a hole, where were thrown all the scraps and bones and peelings from the kitchen.

‘Oh dear! Oh dear!’ cried the maid when she came back and found the parrot gone. And at first she was panic-stricken to think what the mistress would say. But then she thought she would grill a chicken’s head instead; she was sure her mistress would not know.

And so it was, for when the maid placed the dish with a chicken’s head before her mistress, the dancing girl ate it, without suspecting it was not the parrot’s head.

Vikram lived hidden in the hole where the scraps of food were thrown. Though he was very uncomfortable, because it was not a clean place to live in and he was afraid of being discovered, he soon grew new feathers and flew away to a temple in a jungle.



It chanced that the dancing girl, who was very afraid of death, came here, one day, to pray to God that He might transport her soul and body to heaven intact.

‘Oh, only grant my prayer, O God,’ she wept as she knelt before the idol, ‘and I’ll do anything, anything you wish me to do.’

Now, Vikram who sat behind the idol, recognised her voice and thought: ‘Here is an opportunity to have some fun!’ So, changing his voice slightly, he said :

‘Your prayer will be granted, lady, if you sell all you possess and distribute the money among the poor. Then, come to the temple courtyard and I will transport you from earth to heaven, body and soul.’

The dancing girl, thinking that God Himself had spoken to her, went and did exactly as she had heard. Then she came back and, sitting outside the temple, told the people

how the idol had promised to lift her to heaven complete with her body and soul. The people listened to her story with great interest. Believing she was really going to be taken up to heaven, they went and called all the townsfolk to come and see the miracle.

But as she waited for the time when the ascent to heaven was to take place, there was heard a fluttering of wings, and Vikram emerged, mocking :

‘Oh, dancing girl! So you have come to be lifted to heaven. I am afraid you are too heavy with the burden of your sins, to be lifted up!’

Then she recognised the parrot’s voice and knew it was he who had spoken from behind the idol. So she was full of remorse to think she had ill-treated him and went and dashed her head against a wall and killed herself.

Now, in the crowd which had come to see the miracle at the temple, was Butti, Vikram’s Prime Minister, who had been searching for his King. When he saw the parrot talking like a human being to the dancing girl, he knew it was Vikram. And he ran to a little hillock nearby, to be visible from the air. Vikram, as he was hovering around, at once recognised him. He flew to Butti’s hand and came back with him to Ujjain.

But here the problem arose as to how the king was to re-enter his body, because that body was occupied by the carpenter’s son, whose own body had, of course, decayed.

Butti was, however, equal to any situation. He knew how to solve this difficulty. He released the pretending Raja and told him that the original Raja had come to get his



throne back. The carpenter's son, of course, insisted that he was the real Raja.

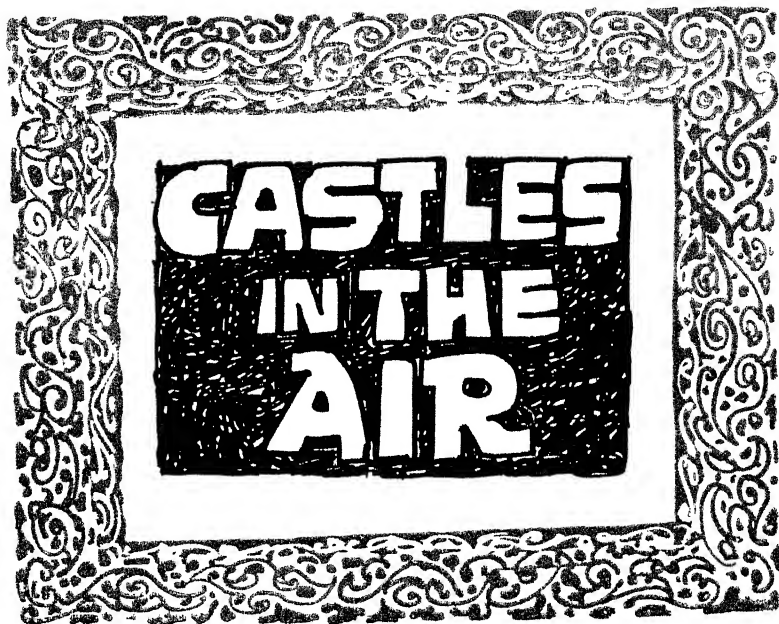
'As the other Raja says he is the real Raja and you say you are the real Raja,' said Butti, 'the best way to decide which of you is right, is to have a tournament between your ram and his ram.'

Now it happened that the ram which belonged to Vikram had been kept tied to a lime tree and its horns had grown very strong by rubbing against its tender stem. But the ram of the carpenter's son had been kept tied to a teak tree, the trunk of which was so hard that this ram's horns had become loose by being rubbed against it.

When the match began and the carpenter's son saw that his ram's horns could neither attack nor defend, he was afraid he would lose the tournament. So he cut off his ram's head and, leaving his body, put his soul into the ram's, thinking he could fight better and would, thereupon, win.

It was as Butti had anticipated and he had asked Vikram to be near at hand. As soon as he saw the pretender emerge out of the Raja's body, he signed to his master. Vikram at once left the parrot's body and entered his own. He then took his spear and thrust it through the ram in whose body was the soul of the carpenter's son. And he went with Butti to his palace to meet his Pomegranate Queen, who was overjoyed to have him back. And they lived happily ever afterwards.





ONCE upon a time there lived a Brahmin in India who did no work and was always building castles in the air. One day his mother chastised him for wasting his time, and persuaded him to enter a profession. Fortunately, as he was then feeling very disgusted with himself, he listened to her advice. But the question was to what calling should he devote himself. He had not the learning to be a priest; he was too weak of body to be a soldier; and, as he was a Brahmin, he could not do any menial work. So he decided he would be a business man.

‘What would you like to sell?’ his mother asked. She suggested various things: grain, cloth, eatables. But, waiving all these suggestions aside, he said he wanted to sell shiny glass bangles and pots of coloured clay.

His mother gave him the money to invest in this business. He bought a basketful of glassware and sat down in the market square to await the coming of customers.

As the silken colours of the ware before him glistened when the sunshine played on them, the reflecting rays lifted his thoughts across the sky to soar on high. ‘I shall sell these things at a profit of ten per cent, today’, he thought. ‘With that money I shall buy imitation pearls and sell them





as real. I should certainly make a hundred rupees by doing so. With that money, I shall buy some goats. They will have young ones every six months, and thus I shall have a whole herd of goats. With the goats I shall buy cows. As soon as they have calved, I shall sell the calves and buy buffaloes in exchange. With the profit on the sale of the buffaloes, I

shall buy mares. When the mares have foaled, I shall have plenty of horses. I shall sell them and get plenty of gold. With the gold I shall build a castle on the mountain peak, mantled all about with garden bowers. The Raja of Hastinapura will hear of it and will offer me the hand of his daughter, Kausalya, with a large dowry. I shall accept her in marriage and I will have a son by her. When the boy is old enough to dance on my knee, I shall sit in the courtyard of my palace and beckon him to come and play with me. Then I shall get irritated by his pranks and abuse him and scold him. He will begin to shriek and I shall call my wife to come and take him. She will be busy doing some household work and I shall get up and give her such a kick as will never let her bones be idle afterwards.'

The force and vehemence of this feeling converted the thought in his day-dreaming head into an actual act. Lo! he gave such a furious kick that all the glass and earthen wares in his basket were shattered to pieces on the ground before him.





THE PRINCESS WHO LOVED HER FATHER LIKE SALT

ONCE upon a time, there lived in the north of Hindustan, a king who had seven daughters. One day he called them all to his court and asked them :

‘Tell me, my children, each of you, how much you love me ?’

The six older princesses answered one after another. ‘Father, we love you like the sweetest sugar.’

The seventh one remained quiet for some time. Then, pressed to answer, she said :

‘Father, I love you like salt.’

The king, who had been very pleased to hear the answers of his elder daughters, felt very angry at the answer of his seventh daughter. In a rage he ordered her to be removed from his sight and exiled.

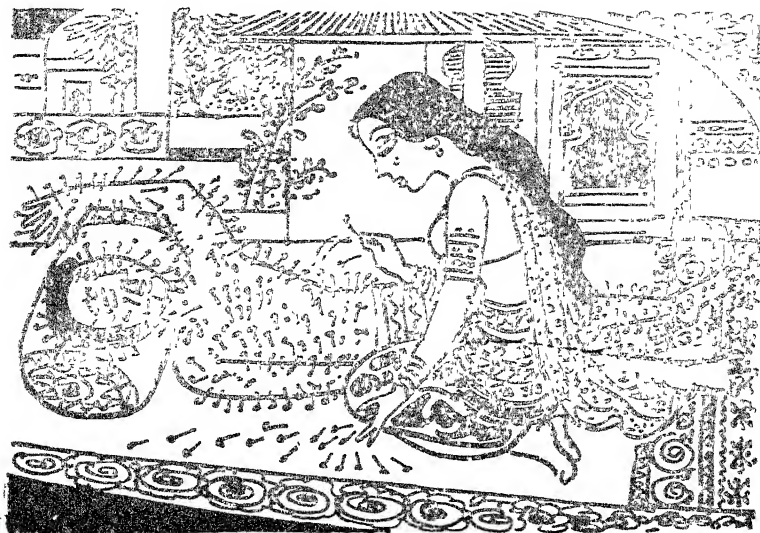
The servants brought a palanquin and bore the youngest princess away to a dense jungle. The poor princess cried and cried to think of her fate when they left her there, till the evening came and she fell asleep.



When she woke up next morning, what was her surprise but to see a plate full of food and a glass full of water lying by her side. She wondered who could have been her helper in such a lonely spot. Eating the food, as she was famished, she prayed to God to show her the person who had saved her life.

She waited and waited to see if some one would appear, but in vain. Then she got up and started to search for the person who had given her the food. After she had walked some distance without seeing anyone, she was about to give up her quest. When, lo ! right in the heart of the jungle, hidden away among the trees, she saw a marble palace shimmering in the sunshine. With very great difficulty she crept through the dense undergrowth which grew in the forest. She went and knocked at the palace gates. Although no one answered her knock, the gates flew open and disclosed to her a milk-white building situated in the loveliest of lovely gardens, containing a miniature lake of clear, crystal water. She entered the courtyard of the palace, but no one seemed about. So she walked stealthily through all the beautiful rooms, till she came to one where a beautiful prince lay in a swoon, covered with needles from head to foot.

The princess sat down beside him and at once began to pull the needles out of his body. All that day and night she kept busy, and the next day and the next and the next, pulling the needles out of the prince's body. Yet there were still more needles to be plucked.



At last, after weeks and weeks of work, all the needles were extracted from the prince's body, except one which lay stuck in his head. The princess knowing that the prince would wake from his swoon when the last needle was taken out, thought she would go and have a bath in the lake outside and make herself beautiful.

Now the prince had a cruel wife. She it was who had stuck the needles into his body. When the princess, who loved her father like salt, had gone to bathe, the cruel woman found that all the needles had been taken out of her husband's body. Cunningly, she thought she would take the credit for relieving him of his pain. She took the last needle out and brought him back to life.



When the princess, who loved her father like salt, came back, she heard the prince asking: 'Who has taken the needles out of my body and brought me back to life?' She was going to answer, when a voice from behind a curtain shouted: 'I have, with the help of this new servant who has come to the palace.'

The princess who loved her father like salt, was helpless. She did not want to say anything lest the prince's wife should kill her. So she quietly accepted the position of a servant in the palace.

When the prince recovered his health, he saw the girl working about the house and thought she was too beautiful to be a servant. But he was afraid of his cruel wife, and dared not say anything.

One day he was going to another country for a change of air and asked his queen what she would like him to bring back for her. And he also asked the servant girl.

While the queen said she wanted some jewels, and

silks, the princess who loved her father like salt, said she would like a small Sun box.

The prince had never heard of such a thing as a Sun box. He did not know what it was like and how and where it was to be found. But he promised her he would bring it for her and went away to the other country.

While he was travelling, he constantly had the Sun box in mind. Everywhere he went he asked for it. But no one had ever heard of such a thing.

When the prince was about to return from his holiday, he still hadn't found the present for the servant girl, and was very sad. As he lay thinking at night, however, he had a dream in which he saw himself walking through a forest to the cottage of an ascetic, who slept for nine years and then kept awake for ten years afterwards. And he had a Sun box.

The prince mounted his horse next morning and, with a few attendants, set out to find the jungle of his dreams. He went on and on, till he came to a place when, lo ! he saw an ascetic exactly like the one he had seen in his dream. A great many shrubs and plants had grown on the hermit's body which the prince removed. Then, having tidied him, he waited for the divine man to wake up.

The ascetic arose after two weeks. Seeing that there was no ugly growth of grass on his body, he knew that the prince who sat at his feet had removed it. So he blessed him and asked him to beg for a boon.

'I want the Sun box, holy man,' prayed the prince with joined hands.



‘You have asked for a difficult thing,’ said the ascetic, ‘but you are a devoted man and I shall give it to you.’

So saying the ascetic went to a beautiful well. Descending into it he reached the house of the red fairy who, he knew, had the Sun box which the prince desired. He stood chanting an incantation in the water and the fairy appeared.

‘I am at your service, O prince of hermits,’ she said.

‘I want the Sun box, O little one,’ he replied. Down plunged the fairy into the water in the twinkling of an eye and brought up a beautiful little casket.

‘There are seven small dolls in it,’ she explained, ‘and a little magic flute. No one except she who wants it must open it. And she should open it only at night.’

The ascetic thanked her. He went and gave the box to the prince, telling him all that the fairy had told him. The prince was delighted. Hiding it securely in the folds of his turban, he begged the sage’s leave and went away.

When he reached home he called his wife and gave her the presents of silks and jewels he had brought for her. Then he called the princess who loved her father like salt, and gave her the Sun box. She thanked him. As she knew she was not to open it except at night, she took it away and hid it under her pillow.

At night, after her work was finished and she was alone, she went out all by herself into the heart of the jungle. Sitting down in a clearance, she opened the Sun box. The flute and the seven little dolls fell out. She picked up the magic instrument and, putting it to her lips, began to play. Slowly and silently the dolls began to move in a rhythmic sway around her. They busied themselves, combing her hair, plaiting it and adorning it with flowers. But during this toilet, the princess, who loved her father like salt, wept as she played on the magic flute. The fairies noticed her grief and tried to make her smile, but in vain.

At length one of them made so bold as to ask: 'Why do you cry, O beautiful princess?'

'Because my father was unjust and cruel,' she replied, 'and banished me from his kingdom for saying I loved him like salt when my sisters said they loved him like sugar; and because I love the prince whom I relieved of the pain of the needles thrust into him by his wife.'

'Do not cry, do not cry,' consoled the fairies. 'Everything will be well, by and by.'

The princess then played the flute and sent the fairies into the Sun box. Then she went back to the palace before the dawn.



The next night she took the box again, and went to the same spot in the jungle. Everything happened as on the previous night, except that a wood-cutter who was passing through the forest on his way home, was fascinated by the music he heard and the spectacle of the dance. Climbing up a tree, he saw the princess weep and wail: 'My father was unjust and cruel and banished me from his kingdom for saying I loved him like salt when my sisters said they loved him like sugar; and I love the prince whom I relieved of the pain of the needles thrust into him by his wife.'

The third night, the same thing happened and the wood-cutter, who was again on his way homewards, saw and heard all. He was very puzzled.

The next day the wood-cutter went to the palace and told the prince about what he had seen. The prince was very astonished and said: 'I will come with you and see the miracle for myself.'

That night, before the princess, who loved her father like salt, went out of the palace, the prince came with the wood-cutter and climbed up into the branches of a tree to watch. Soon he saw the princess come and play on her flute and the fairies come out to dance and sing. Then he saw the princess weep and wail, exactly as the wood-cutter had told him she did.

Now the prince who had thought her a servant maid was so astonished to know that she was a princess, that he jumped from the tree and came and knelt before her, begging her to forgive him and marry him. Then he brought

her home and, ordering his cruel queen to be taken away to a far-off island, began to make preparations for the marriage.

The princess, who loved her father like salt, wrote to her parents and her sisters to come to her wedding.

They all came and were very surprised to see that she was still living. The wedding took place amid great rejoicing and her relatives stayed with her some time. For a whole week the princess gave to everybody ordinary food, both sweet and salt, but to her father she gave only sweets, till he got tired of eating sweets every day. At the end of the week, she gave him a salt dish. Then he realized the value of salt. He repented and made amends to his daughter for his cruelty by giving to her and her husband a part of his kingdom to rule.

And they all lived happily ever after.



THE LION AND THE GOAT

ONCE upon a time there was a herd of goats that went to graze in a forest every day. One day, as they were returning home at the hour of cowdust, one of their number, an old she-goat, became tired and was left behind. The evening fell and as she could not find her way back, she sought refuge in a cave that she saw near at hand. What was her surprise when she went in and found a lion seated there. She was terrified and stood still for a moment, then collecting her wits about her, she reflected on what she could do. 'If I try to run,' she thought, 'the lion will soon



catch me, but if I muster up courage and hold my own against him, I may manage to survive.'

She walked impudently up to the lion, therefore, without showing the slightest sign of fear. The lion looked at her, looked and looked, not knowing what to make of this boldness on the part of a mere goat, so unlike the attitude of the other members of her tribe, none of which had ever dared to come near him. At last he thought she could not be a goat but must be some other strange animal which he had not seen before.

'Who are you, old one?' he ventured to ask courteously.

'I am the queen of the goats,' she replied, 'I am a devotee of the God Siva, and I have vowed to devour a hundred tigers, twenty-five elephants and ten lions, in his honour.'

I have already eaten the hundred tigers and the twenty-five elephants and now I am looking for the ten lions.'

The lion was extremely perturbed to hear this and, believing that the goat had really come to devour him, crept out of the cave on the pretext that he was going to wash his face at the river.

As he was rushing out he met a jackal, who, seeing the king of the beasts in a panic, asked what was the matter.

The lion gave the jackal a hurried account of his meeting with what he said was a queer looking animal, very much like a goat, but without any timidity of one.

The jackal was very clever. He soon guessed that the cause of all this excitement was only a miserable old she-goat. And he tried to reassure the lion by telling him that it was a ruse which the feeble, old animal had employed in order to escape being devoured.

'Compose yourself and come back with me to your cave, and make a meal of this pretender,' he suggested.

The lion took this advice and returned with the jackal.

Now when the goat saw the lion returning, she knew that it was the wily jackal with him who was responsible for it. But she did not lose courage. She walked up towards them and, assuming a very dignified pose, said to the jackal:

'Is this the way you carry out my orders? I sent you to fetch me ten lions to eat at once, and you have brought me only one. I shall skin you for your negligence!'

As soon as the lion heard this, he thought he had been

betrayed by the jackal, fell on him in a fury and gobbled him up.

Meanwhile, the goat slipped out of the cave and escaped from the lion's clutches.



A CRUEL STEPMOTHER

ONCE upon a time, there was a king of India who had a beautiful queen. He loved her very deeply and she bore him two fine children. The little girl was five and the little boy was three. They all lived very happily together.

But, suddenly, the queen was taken ill and died. The king was very grieved to lose her. He wept bitterly to think of his little children without a mother. As, however, he had to be very busy attending to the affairs of his state, he could not take care of them himself. So he found two servants, a man and a woman to look after them.

A short while after the queen's death the husband of the daughter of a neighbouring king died, and she offered to marry the king of India. But the king of India did not want to marry again. He knew that his new queen would be unkind to his children, as stepmothers often are. But the daughter of the neighbouring king assured him that she would love his children as her own, and persuaded him to marry her.

Everything went well for a while. Then the new queen began to beat the children and to neglect them in every way. One day she slapped the little prince on his face so hard that his cheek swelled. When the king came back from his court, he saw his son's swollen face and asked him who had beaten him. The child was too afraid to complain about his stepmother. He just sobbed and wept. The king asked his servants. But they were all too afraid of the new queen and remained silent. The king guessed it was his





new queen who had been cruel. He was very angry with her and said: 'I married you because you said you would be kind to my children. If you ill-treat them I shall send you away to your father's home.' Then he went away to court.

Now the new queen was spiteful towards her step-children, because they had been the cause of her being rebuked by the king. She decided to kill them. She took a large knife and beckoned them to her. The poor little children, frightened as they were, went on their hands and knees and prayed to be spared their lives. But the cruel queen was deaf to their entreaties. Cruelly she severed their heads from their bodies. Then she cut their bodies up into numerous parts. Burying their heads, their hands and their feet, she cooked a curry with the rest of their bodies.

When the king came home to dinner, the queen set the curry with some rice before him.

‘Where are my children?’ asked the king, as he was never used to eat his food without them.

‘You eat your food,’ said the queen; ‘they are probably out playing.’

But the king refused to eat his food without his children and went out to look for them. There was not a sign of them anywhere. The king was full of grief. He prayed to God that his children should come back wherever they were. Lo! his son and daughter stood before him hale and hearty.

‘Oh, where have you been?’ cried the king, embracing them, almost hysterical with joy.

‘We were in the jungle playing,’ replied the children as they dared not tell the truth in the presence of the queen.

So they all sat down to dinner and the curry changed into a kid curry.

The queen simply could not believe her eyes when she

saw her victims alive. She went off to see if their heads, their hands and their feet were still where she had buried them. She found that the graves were empty.

The next day, the queen decided to try and dispose of the children by having them killed far away from the palace in the jungle. So she hired an assassin and said to him: 'I will pay you as much money as you like if you will go and kill those two horrid children somewhere far away from here.' The man agreed to take the children away and to murder them in an out of the way place. But when he began to sharpen his knife they seemed so innocent and beautiful, and he was so touched by their prayers and entreaties, that he left them near their mother's grave. Giving a false report to the queen that he had murdered them, he claimed the money she had promised him.

When the king came back from the court and could not see his children about, he asked the queen where they were. She told him she did not know, because she did not keep them tied to her apron strings all the time. As the days passed and the children seemed lost, the king knew that the queen had murdered them. He began to hate her.



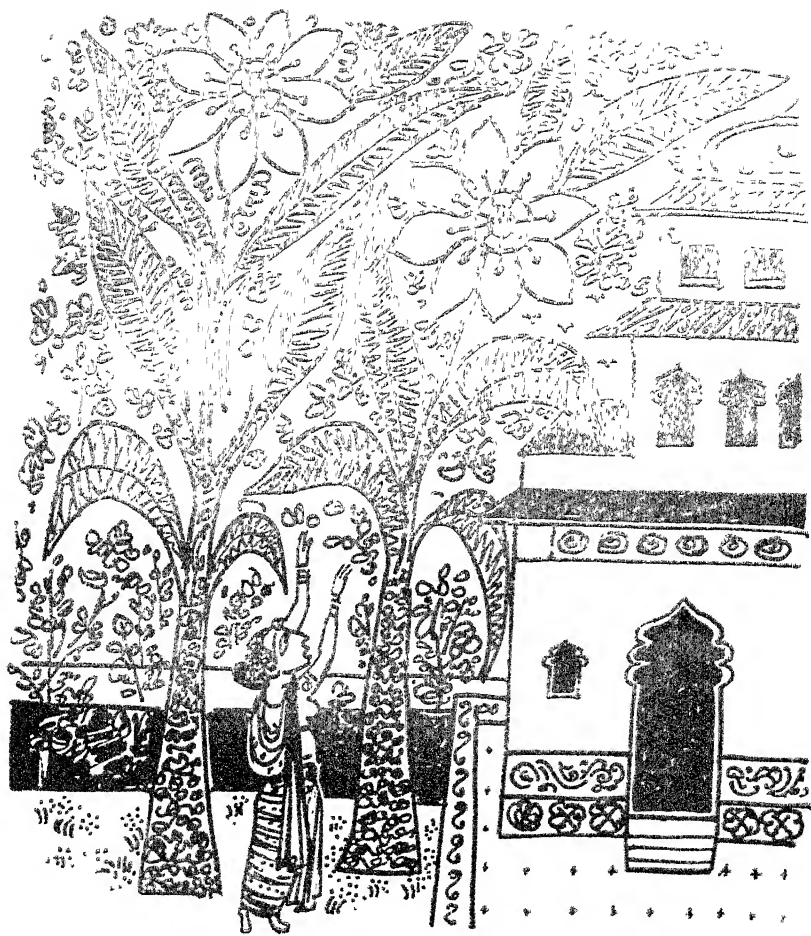
Meanwhile, the young prince and his sister lived in a little palace near their mother's grave, where God brought their real mother back to life to take care of them. But, of course, they did not know that the lady, who looked after them was their mother.

For some time they lived happily like this. Then the new queen got to know that the children were still alive. She was furious to think that her design had failed. So she decided to try to get rid of them again.

She pretended this time to be very ill. She said to the king that the doctors had told her that she could only live, if she could procure the livers of two children, who lived in the jungle, and boil them and drink the essence. The king sent an assassin to kill the children and bring back their livers.

The queen was very pleased to get the livers of the children. As she really did not intend to boil them, she threw them in the garden. But what do you think happened? When the queen woke up next morning she found that two beautiful plants had grown in the place where she had thrown the livers overnight. She said to herself she would go and pluck the plants as soon as she had had her bath. But she forgot all about it that morning. The next morning when she looked, what was her surprise, but to find, that two flowers had blossomed on the plants. She thought to herself she would go and pluck the flowers. But again she forgot. The same thing happened every day.

One day, however, she sent her servant to go and pluck the flowers. But when he got near the trees and tried to



pluck the flowers, they seemed to get out of his reach. The servant came back and told the queen this. She said he was stupid and came to pluck the flowers herself. But

the flowers seemed altogether out of her reach. She thought she would try to pluck them the next day. But again the same thing happened. And the same thing happened the next day, the same the day after, and thus again, till one morning when she looked towards the trees, the flowers had become two ripe fruits.

When the queen saw the two beautiful ripe fruits, her mouth watered and she thought she would go and pluck them. But when she actually went to pluck them, like the flowers before, the fruits were out of her reach. In despair and anger she ordered the fruit trees to be cut. But the fruit trees grew again the day after they had been lopped off. At this the queen was mad with rage. She had the trees hewn to bits. It was of no avail, however, for the trees grew again.

So she went to the king and told him that there was a fruit tree in the garden on which grew two fruits which she wanted to pluck, but that they went out of her reach as soon as she went to pluck them, so that in despair she had had the fruit trees cut, but they had grown again. The king was very surprised. He said he would like to see the trees for himself. The queen at once took him to the garden. The king found it was as his wife had told him.

The king decided, however, to go to the trees alone to try and pluck the fruits. So that very day he went down to the garden in the evening and tried to pluck the fruit. Curiously enough, they fell into his hand at the merest touch. He took them to his bed chamber. Deciding to eat them in the morning, he put them on a tray and went to sleep.

Hardly had he lain back to rest, however, when he heard a little tender voice from one of the fruits call: 'Brother, what can we do now? Tomorrow the king will break open the fruit. If the queen finds out she will kill us again. Three times God has brought us back to life, the fourth time He will not.'

The king listened to this silently. Then he wanted to get up and open the fruit. But he was very tired after the days' work and went to sleep. A little later he opened his eyes and thought he would go up and open the fruit. But he dozed off again. Several times in the night he thus woke up and dozed off again. At last, however, he shook off his lethargy. Getting out of bed, he took a knife and began to cut the fruit hastily.

'Gently, father, gently,' came a voice, 'do not hurt us.'

The king cut the fruit slowly. As the shell broke open, his two children stood before him. He hugged them and kissed them, as they told him the story of how their step-mother had had them killed. The king shut the door so that the queen might not hear them and he gave them food to eat.

In the morning he had a wooden cage built in which he locked up the evil queen and ordered it to be put on fire. When the queen's body was burnt, he had her bones picked. These he put into a tin box and threw into a river so that her sins might be washed away.

Then, for some time, the king and his two children lived happily. But they still wanted someone to complete their happiness. Their dead mother knew it. She daily

prayed to God to put life into her, so that she could go and visit her children some time. God said she could not be born as a woman, but that he would make a little bird of her so that she could fly over to see her little ones. He changed her into a little bird. But she insisted that she wanted to be a woman. So God stuck a pin into her head saying: 'If the pin is taken out, you will become a woman.'

She flew at once to the garden of the king's palace and sat perched on a tree at night, looking towards the rooms where her children slept. Presently a watchman passed under the bough where she sat. She called out to him.

'O watchman! O watchman! Tell me if the king and his children are safe and sound.'

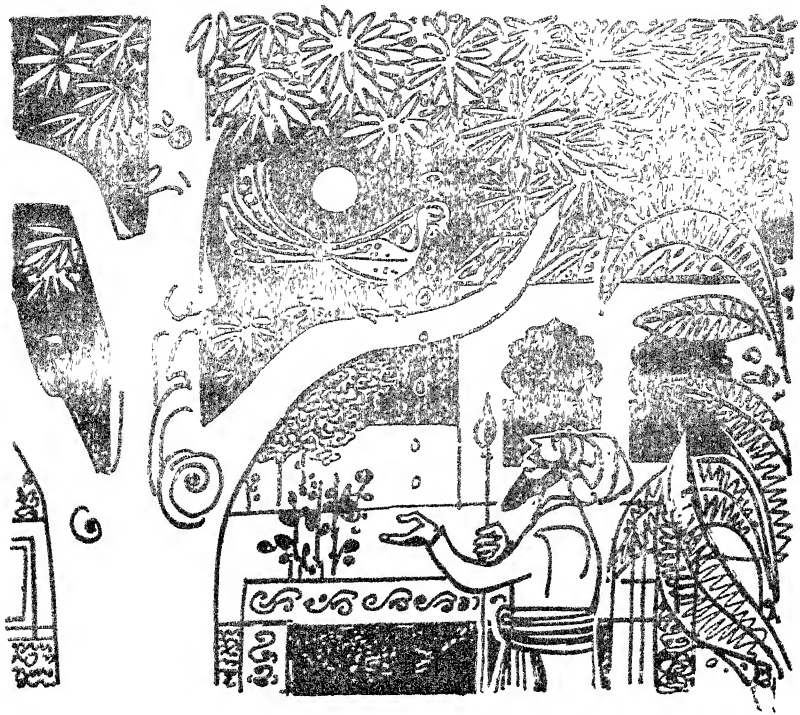
'Yes, yes, little bird,' said the watchman, 'they are quite well.'

The little bird cried with joy to hear this and its tears fell like pearls from its eyes into the garden.

The night watchman was walking about in the palace in the morning when he passed under the tree and found the shining pearls lying about. Knowing not what they were, he picked them up and took them home.

Now the bird came every night and asked about the welfare of the king and the children. When the watchman said they were well, it wept pearls on the grass, which the watchman gathered in the morning. As time went on, he had so many pearls that he often gave them away.

One day a beggar called at the watchman's door, begging for food. The watchman gave him a handful of pearls of



which he had so many. The beggar was very pleased. He thought if the night watchman of the king could give away pearls as alms, the king might give away rubies. So he called at the palace of the king to beg for alms.

The king asked his servants to give the beggar a handful of rice and to dismiss him.

‘Strange,’ protested the greedy beggar, ‘your night watchman gives me pearls. You are mean, you give me only rice.’

The king was very surprised at this. Thinking that the pearls which the bigger said the night watchman gave him, must have been stolen from the palace, he put on the robes of a beggar and went to the night watchman's door, to see if it were so. True enough, the night watchman gave him a handful of pearls when he asked for alms.

'Where did you get these pearls?' asked the king declaring his identity.

'A beautiful bird comes and asks after you and your children, your majesty,' replied the night watchman. When I tell it you are well, it sheds tears which turn into pearls. If your majesty can come tonight you might see it with your own eyes.'

Thereupon the king kept watch with the man under the tree. He saw the bird come and sit on the bough and say:

'Watchman! O Watchman! Are the king and his children well?'

'Yes, they are well,' replied the watchman.

And, then, the bird shed tears of joy which became pearls.

The next day, the king announced an award of ten villages for anyone who would catch the bird alive and bring it to him. The night watchman offered to catch it for nothing at all. And he said, the bird had given him so many pearls that he did not need a prize from the king.

So that night when the bird came and asked about the welfare of the king, the night watchman said: 'The king is very well and so are the children. But they want a little bird

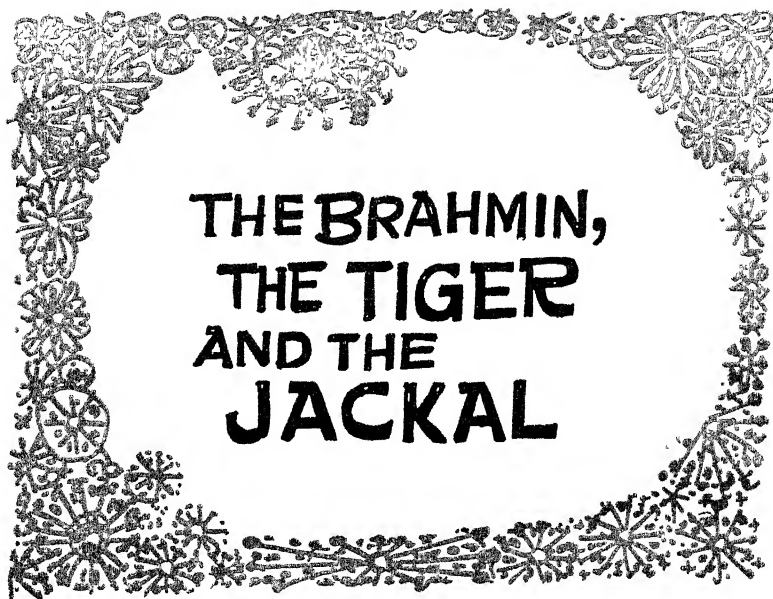
like you to come and play with them. Will you not come and live in the palace and be their companion?’

‘I would love to,’ said the little bird crying with joy. And it came and settled on the watchman’s hand.

The watchman took it to the king and his children in the morning. They were very pleased with it. As they were petting it the king felt a pin sticking in its head. Thinking it must pain the poor little thing, he pulled it out. Lo! his beloved first queen stood before him. The king was overjoyed to meet his wife after all the years. The children were happy to be with their mother.

And they all lived happily ever after.





ONCE upon a time, a Brahmin was going on a pilgrimage, when he came upon an iron cage in which a tiger lay locked up. Looking at the poor beast he pitied it because it was caged. Then, thinking what a danger to life wild animals would be if they were not kept in custody he resumed his journey.

‘O Brahmin, O kind Brahmin,’ called the tiger, who had seen compassion in the eyes of the holy wayfarer, ‘take pity on me. Let me out of this cage before you go. I am thirsty and want to go to that stream to drink a draught of water.’



‘I dare not let you out,’ said the Brahmin, retracing his steps back to the cage. ‘No, I dare not let you out or you will eat me before you go to drink at the stream. No, I am afraid...’

‘O king sage, O truly devoted father,’ appealed the tiger with tears in his eyes, ‘please take pity on me. Please, please have mercy. I could never be so ungrateful as to eat you in return for your goodness to me. Oh, how could you think of such a thing?’

The Brahmin was intensely moved by the tiger’s appeal. Unlocking the door of the cage, he let it out. Then he hurried on his way for he had already been delayed by the tiger. But to his great consternation, the tiger jumped up before him and, blocking his way, shouted :

‘Stay, O Pundit, stay. You were suspicious and afraid that I might eat you if you let me out of the cage. Now you see, you put the idea of eating into my head. So I shall eat you and satisfy my hunger before I go to quench my thirst. The physicians say it is not good to drink on an empty stomach.’

‘Oh, but you promised not to hurt me if I let you out of the cage!’ said the Brahmin quaking with fear. ‘Aren’t you an ungrateful wretch?’

‘Promise or no promise,’ replied the tiger with an inscrutable expression on his face. ‘I am famished, and I must eat you. Besides, I cannot neglect the physician’s advice and go to drink on an empty stomach.’

The poor Brahmin now stood trembling, unable to say a word, while the tiger, impatient for his food, came jumping towards him. Then the Brahmin thought he would try to secure a few more minutes lease of life from his enemy, if he could.

‘Listen, my friend,’ he said to the tiger, gently but firmly. ‘You were in dire pain locked up in that cell. I released you because you promised not to hurt me when you were free. But now you want to eat me. Let us go and ask five judges if it is fair that you should eat me.’

‘Very well,’ agreed the tiger reluctantly, and walked beside the Brahmin to where a banyan tree stood, sombre and bearded like a judge.

‘O wise old banyan tree, listen and give judgment,’ prayed the Brahmin with joined hands, prostrating himself before it.



‘State your case’, said the banyan tree with hoary dignity.

‘This tiger’ said the Brahmin, ‘was locked up in a cage. He saw me pass and begged me to let him out as he was thirsty and wanted to go to a nearby stream to drink water. I was afraid he would kill me if I opened the doors of the cage. But he vowed he would never think of hurting me. So I let him out. Now he wishes to eat me. Tell me, O wise one, is it just that he should do so?’

‘Men often come to rest in the cool shade of my green boughs,’ said the banyan, ‘but in the winter, because they don’t need my shelter they cut my branches and burn my foliage as fuel for their fires. Let the tiger eat the man, for mankind is iniquitous and ungrateful.’

‘O wise judge, most truly said!’ exclaimed the tiger and jumped towards the Brahmin, saying: ‘Now, O Pundit, your flesh smells well!’

‘Wait, wait, my friend, there are four other judges to be consulted yet’, said the Brahmin. And he addressed a dove that sat cooing in her nest in the grove :

‘O gentle and most tender dove, listen and give judgment.’

‘State your case,’ said the dove lovingly.

The Brahmin narrated the story of how the tiger had begged to be let out of the cage and had promised not to hurt him, but now wanted to eat him.

‘Men like the fawn colour of my race,’ said the dove, ‘and they admire our music. But whenever they see us about they fling stones at us or cast nets to ensnare us.

Man truly is the most ignoble being on earth, while beasts are truly noble. Let the noble prevail.'

'Now', said the tiger, triumphant.

'Come, we will ask the opinion of that bullock,' said the Brahmin feeling that the domesticated animal might decide in his favour. The tiger followed him, blushing at the nobility that the dove had attributed to him.

'O sacred bullock!' O holy consort of our holy cow! listen and give me your most considered judgment,' said the Brahmin reaching the bullock. 'I was on my way to a pilgrimage when I came upon this tiger in a cage. He begged to let him loose because he said he was thirsty. I was afraid he might kill me. But he assured me that I would be safe if only I freed him. So I opened the cage. But as I was proceeding on my journey, he comes and says that he must eat me before he quenches his thirst.'

'You honour me, Pundit, by calling me sacred and holy,' said the bullock. 'But you do this in the hour of your need. It is the way of your tribe. When I was young and strong and worked for your brother, the peasant, he fed me and tended me with care. Now I am old and decrepit. So he has abandoned me in the wilds to fend for myself as best I can. I feel, therefore, that if men are ungrateful, the beasts might pay them back in their own coin.'

'I am hungry for your flesh, O Pundit; I am hungry!' roared the tiger rushing towards the Brahmin.

'Wait, wait, there are two more judges still left for us to consult,' said the Brahmin hoping against hope that some one would recognise the merit of his deed. 'Here's the road.'

Let me ask its opinion.' And he forthwith explained his cause to the road.

'My good sir,' said the road, 'how can you expect any justice. Look at me. I am useful to everyone, rich and poor, man and beast and bird. Yet they all trample on me and give me nothing but the ashes of their hookahs and husks of their grain to eat.'

The Brahmin was in despair. Still he hoped that the jackal whom he saw coming might find in his favour.

—'O Uncle Jackal, listen and do me justice!' he shouted.

'Now tell me the whole story from the beginning to the end,' said the jackal.

The Brahmin recited everything that had occurred in detail.

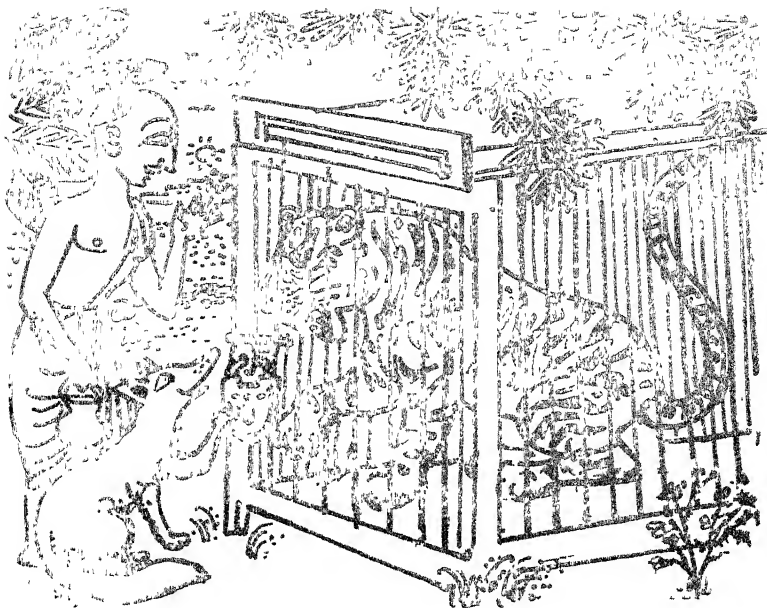
'Oh how stupid of me, but I haven't got the end or the beginning of your tale. Please tell it to me all over again.'

The Brahmin retold the story.

'It's very odd,' said the jackal shaking his head, 'it all seems to come in at the one ear and go out of the other. Now let me see exactly how it happened. You, my dear Brahmin, I take it, were in the cage and the tiger came by...'

'No, No' interrupted the tiger, 'you are a fool! I was in the cage.'

'Of course!' cried the jackal, pretending to be a fool. 'Yes! I was in the cage—no, I wasn't—dear! dear! What has happened to my brain? Let me see, the cage was in the tiger and the Brahmin came walking by—no, no, that's not it, either.... Well my dear friends, go your way and ask another, for I shall never understand!'



‘Yes, you shall!’ returned the tiger, in a rage at the jackal’s stupidity. ‘I’ll make you understand!’

‘Look here; I am the tiger—’

‘Yes,’ said the jackal.

‘And that is the Brahmin—’

‘Yes,’ agreed the jackal.

‘And that is the cage.’

‘And I was in the cage, you understand?’

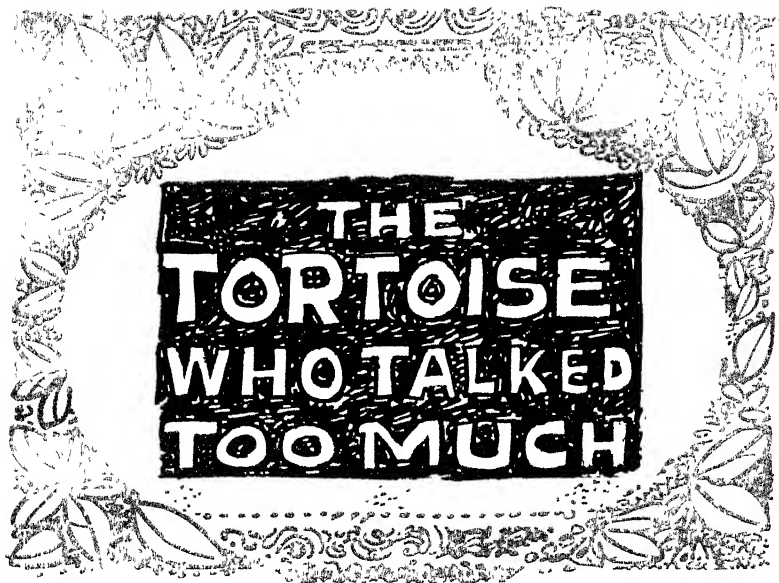
‘Yes—no—oh I wish I could see it clearly.’

‘Well, you are a fool! utter fool!’ shouted the tiger.

‘Yes, perhaps,’ said the jackal. ‘But I wish I could see how you got into the cage!’

‘How? Well, in the ordinary way, of course, you silly!’ And at this he jumped into the cage and shouted; ‘Like this. Now do you see?’

‘Perfectly!’ affirmed the jackal. Then, moving craftily, he shut the door and locked the tiger in. And the Brahmin thanked the jackal for his help and walked away.



ONCE upon a time there was a king who talked too much. He was always asking his ministers silly questions. When he had no questions to ask them, he worried them by telling them things they did not want to know. While he was talking, nobody could get a word in edgeways.

Now, the king's Prime Minister was a very wise man and he wanted to cure his master of his talkativeness. But he dared not tell the king openly not to talk too much, lest he should be angry and have him killed. So he waited patiently for an opportunity to offer itself.

One day, his chance came. The king had been

babbling, babbling and babbling all day long, till his throat was hoarse and he had lost his voice and could not talk any more. Since, however, he was eager to continue the conversation but could not talk, he asked his Prime Minister to tell him a tale. The wise Prime Minister gladly agreed and recited the following story :—

“Once upon a time, there lived in a small lake in the Himalayas a tortoise who talked too much. All his neighbours in the pool were tired of answering his eternal whys and wherefores and bored with his unending gossip. So tired were they of him that they would slip away quietly, whenever they saw him approaching.

The tortoise felt very lonely, for he loved talking and he had no one to talk to. At length, two wild geese descended on the pond to rest awhile on their way to the lake Mana-Sarovar. The talkative tortoise, knowing that they were strangers and would listen to him, came at once and engaged them in conversation.

‘What country do you come from? What is your name? What is your profession?’ He fired question after question, without waiting for an answer.

The geese were very amused. And, as they were only staying for a little while, they did not have time to know that the tortoise was only a very talkative bore. So they eagerly responded to his questions and readily listened to his gossip.

The tortoise was sad to think that he should find two such friends, only to lose them, after all, as soon as he had found them, for he knew that they were only staying a little

while and then going away. An idea occurred to him, however, and he abruptly turned to them and said: 'I am tired of the apathy of my neighbours in this pool. Could you not take me with you to the lake Mana-Sarovar?'

'But how can we take you to the lake Mana-Sarovar?' said the wild geese, 'you can't fly!'

'Oh, but that is easy,' replied the tortoise cheekily. 'You hold a stick between your beaks and I shall bite hold of it in the middle. Then you can bear me over to the lake, Mana-Sarovar.'

'Very well,' agreed the wild geese, amused by this novel suggestion.

So they held a stick in their beaks: the tortoise bit hold of it in the middle; and they flew off into the air slowly. But they had not gone very far over the hills, when a crow noticed them and called to the other birds 'O friends, O friends, come and see this peculiar sight!' 'O friends, O friends, come and see this peculiar sight!' repeated a parrot after the crow, as he approached with the other birds.

'What is there so funny about it?' blurted out the tortoise immediately and, losing hold of the stick in his anxiety to talk, fell on the rocks and was killed instantaneously."

When the recital was finished, the king asked the Prime Minister to tell him the moral of the story. The wise Prime Minister brought home the meaning in the following verses :—

Verily the tortoise was killed,
who talked too much;



For he could not be stilled
And talked too much.
Listen, then, O king,
Speak wise words, few and in season,
To talk over much, O king,
Disturbs the reason.

The king realised the folly of talking too much and became a man of few words, which he spoke wisely and in season.

